May 19, 1988

NOVA SCOTIA TASK FORCE ON AIDS

INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

After extensively reviewing AIDS public information and education efforts, both within and outside Canada, it is the considered opinion of the Nova Scotia Task Force on AIDS that the best method presently available to control the spread of HIV infection is through a comprehensive public education program. Our objective in proposing the interim recommendations that follow is to reinforce and broaden existing efforts and to ensure that consistent information is disseminated on an ongoing basis.

To date, the most effective approach for creating a sound public information and education effort involves a comprehensive strategy directed at increasing, then maintaining awareness and knowledge levels within the general population and encouraging attitude and behaviour change within specific subgroups of the population.

It is recommended that Nova Scotia initiate a co-ordinated, comprehensive program of community-based public education. The goals of a public education program for AIDS in Nova Scotia are to:

i) increase the public's understanding of HIV infection and AIDS;

ii) prevent the spread of HIV infection; and

iii) develop a caring and compassionate community response to AIDS.

The Task Force has identified several mechanisms for meeting these goals. The following interim recommendations address primarily the goal of increasing knowledge and understanding regarding AIDS. This is an essential basis for containing the spread of infection and for developing an appropriate community response to AIDS. Additional recommendations that address this and other goals will be contained in the final report of the Task Force.

The following two considerations apply to all the interim recommendations:

i) AIDS education programs or activities initiated pursuant to the recommendations should undergo formative and outcome evaluation and be revised as necessary.

ii) The costs associated with the following recommendations have not been determined as these will depend on the implementation strategy. It should be noted, however, that some government departments have already started working on the implementation of certain recommendations.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

I. Comprehensive Public Education

1. **A provincial multi-media (TV, radio, posters, pamphlets, etc.) campaign aimed at the general population to increase awareness and knowledge about AIDS be developed and implemented.**

2. **A follow-up (albeit reduced) multi-media campaign to maintain the knowledge levels of the general population and reinforce the messages regarding how to prevent AIDS transmission be developed and implemented.**

3. **An AIDS public information committee be established under the aegis of the permanent AIDS Advisory Commission, with representation from the media and the government, to develop and implement a co-ordinated and on-going mass-media campaign.**

These recommendations will require further elaboration in order to reach all audiences and address the specific needs of identified audiences. To this end, it will be recommended that a series of targetted initiatives be developed and implemented with the goal of trying to change attitudes and behaviours.

Such audiences could include:

i) audiences at high risk of contracting the AIDS virus.

ii) audiences with special needs that can best be served through specialized campaigns.

iii) audiences that have specific concerns that are best addressed through focussed attention.

To fulfill this aim, further research and deliberation is needed before detailed strategy options designed for the specific target audiences can be developed.

II. Public Schools

4. **The Department of Education require that AIDS-specific information be compulsory for all students beginning at least in Grade 7 and continuing until Grade 12.**

In support of this recommendation, the Nova Scotia Task Force on AIDS:

i) endorses the Department of Education's Personal Development and Relationships program including AIDS education, which is designed for students in Grades 7 to 9; and

ii) endorses the Department of Education's resources and guidelines for senior high schools and urges that all senior high school students receive appropriate AIDS education, as approved by the Department of Education, in addition to AIDS information received in any existing courses.

Rationale: It is necessary that our young people receive the appropriate educational material to be able to protect themselves against AIDS.

Objective: All students receive appropriate information regarding AIDS and the transmission of the virus and how to prevent contracting the AIDS virus.

5. **All elementary teachers be provided with in-service training that will enable them to respond in an age-appropriate manner to AIDS-related issues and questions.**

Rationale: In order that students receive age-appropriate AIDS information, elementary teachers must be prepared to deal with AIDS-related questions and issues.

Objective: Teachers be able to respond to AIDS-related questions and issues.

6. **Teachers in the public schools and community colleges be provided with appropriate in-service programs in AIDS education, including basic knowledge, updating on developed curriculum materials, and age-appropriate methods for teaching and dealing with AIDS-related issues and questions.**

Rationale: In order that students receive appropriate AIDS information in a non-threatening environment, teachers must be prepared to deal with the AIDS-related content and the psycho-social issues and questions related to this area.

Objective: Teachers be able to teach and respond to AIDS-related issues and questions.

7. **School boards provide parents with an opportunity to review and become familiar with the instructional materials to be used in the schools within a structured parent-teacher environment.**

Rationale: To provide parents with information about the AIDS curriculum their children are receiving.

Objective: Parents have the opportunity to be knowledgeable about the AIDS curriculum offered in the schools.

III. Post Secondary Educational Institutions

8. **The Department of Advanced Education and Job Training develop and require that annual AIDS-specific education be compulsory for students in institutions under its jurisdiction.**

Rationale: It is necessary that our young people receive the appropriate educational material to be able to protect themselves against AIDS.

Objective: All community college students receive appropriate information regarding AIDS and the transmission of the virus and how to prevent contracting the AIDS virus.

9. **Universities (including Dalhousie, Mount St. Vincent, N. S. College of Art and Design, St. Francis Xavier, King's College, Acadia, Saint Mary's, Technical University, Université Ste. Anne, University College of Cape Breton, Atlantic School of Theology, N. S. Agricultural College, and N. S. Teachers College) assume responsibility for developing an educational program which will ensure that all students receive consistent and reliable AIDS information on an on-going basis. Where appropriate, consultation and advice can be provided through the Department of Health and Fitness, the Department of Advanced Education and Job Training, and other knowledgeable agencies.**

Rationale: It is necessary that university students receive consistent and reliable information to be able to protect themselves against AIDS.

Objective: To ensure that university students are provided with AIDS information and education on an on-going basis.

10. **Institutions that have students in training for teaching and health and care occupations ensure these students be provided with appropriate AIDS education within their curricula. Where appropriate, consultation and advice can be provided through the Department of Health and Fitness, Department of Education, and other knowledgeable agencies.**

Rationale: These students need to receive appropriate AIDS-related information necessary to their functioning in their chosen professions.

Objective: To ensure that students in training receive appropriate AIDS-related information.

IV. Other Information Programs

Hotlines

11. **All existing helpline/hotline personnel (not specifically AIDS-related) receive education on AIDS and the issues surrounding AIDS.**

Rationale: To ensure consistent and reliable information relating to AIDS is delivered in the community by existing structures.

Objective: To ensure that all helpline/hotline personnel can address questions, concerns, and requests they may receive in regard to AIDS.

12. **A province-wide, toll-free AIDS hotline be established to provide information and referrals to all Nova Scotians on an anonymous basis.**

Rationale: A hotline can provide anonymous, individualized information to people who might not otherwise seek these services in their own communities or where such services might not be available.

Objective: To provide reliable and consistent AIDS information and referrals for counselling or treatment on an anonymous basis.

Workplace

13. **An AIDS education program be provided for public and private sector employees and employers. Where possible, existing programs should be used.**

Rationale: To have in place a base of knowledge about AIDS to provide consistent and reliable information in order to avoid or reduce unnecessary anxiety and discrimination.

Objective: To educate all employees and employers regarding basic knowledge about AIDS, including transmission of the AIDS virus, possible occupation-specific exposure to the virus, appropriate infection control procedures, and discrimination.

Note: In development of arrangements for this program, it is important that employee unions and organizations, as well as employers, be involved.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia Task Force on AIDS,

W. Andrew MacKay
Chair

May 19, 1988